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Record Number of Americans Committed to Christ

Three Americans in four (74%) say they have made a commitment to Jesus Christ. The proportion now saying they have made this commitment is a record high. A 1988 study on The Unchurched American showed that 66% had committed themselves to Jesus, and the same study a decade earlier in 1978 found just 60% who had said they had made a commitment.

It is important to bear in mind, in assessing these survey findings, that commitment relates to only one component — although a vital core component — of what it means to be a Christian. Furthermore, it should be noted that the findings are based on what people *say* about themselves, and do not necessarily indicate a deep and lived-out commitment.

Trend — Commitment to Jesus Christ

1990	74%
1988	66
1978	60

As might be expected, those now most likely to have made such a commitment are people who say they have been born again (95%). Commitment is higher among Protestants (82%) than among Catholics (72%).

Women are more likely than men to have made a commitment to Jesus Christ, by a margin of 79% to 67%. The level of stated commitment increases as people grow older. Two in three young adults (67%) say they have pledged themselves to Jesus Christ. The level of commitment rises to 74% of those who are 30 to 49 years of age, and to 78% among people who are 50 or older.

While 78% of the whites interviewed say they have a commitment, fewer, 58%, of blacks have made similar moves.

College graduates (68%) less often state a commitment to Jesus Christ than is true for those who did not graduate from college or who only attended high school (76%). Similarly, only two in three of the affluent say they have made a commitment to Jesus Christ.

Regionally, the level of commitment rises in the heartland of America, with 81% of residents of the Midwest and South reporting they have pledged themselves. Stated commitment is at a lower level in the East (63%) and West (66%).

Commitment was determined through the following question:

Would you say you have made a commitment to Jesus Christ, or not?

The results are based on telephone interviews by The Gallup Poll with a randomly-selected national sample of 1,236 adults, 18 and older, conducted June 15-17, 1990.

Profile: People Committed to Jesus Christ

NATIONAL	**74%**
Gender	
Male	67
Female	79
Education	
College graduates	66
Attended college	75
High school grads.	75
Non-high school grads.	78
Race	
White	74
Black	58
Age	
18-29	67
30-49	74
50 and older	78
Region	
East	63
Midwest	81
South	81
West	66
Income	
$50,000 & over	68
$30,000-$49,999	72
$20,000-$29,999	73
Under $20,000	76
Preference	
Protestant	82
Catholic	72
Born again	95

The third in a three-part series

Episcopalian Membership Endorses Activism in Many Fields

A majority of Episcopalians favor a wide range of actions to enable members of their church to achieve spiritual growth, congregational outreach, and social justice. Most, however, draw the line at such actions as changing the liturgy and psalms to be non-sexist in language, sanctioning relationships between members of the same sex, or allowing abortions without restrictions.

Over eight Episcopalian members in 10 (82%) would like to see actions taken that would make it easier for members of their local congregation to speak more easily of their spiritual journeys.

Similar proportions of the congregation would like to see more minorities worshipping with them at their local church (82%), and 79% would want their local congregation to seek newcomers in spite of the changes that might result from their joining the group.

Three members in four (77%) favor seeking unchurched persons for membership in their congregation, but comparatively fewer members believe there is a need to establish new congregations in their local area (55%).

Speaking from the grassroots, over six local members in 10 say they would like to see their church at the national level become more involved in improving the environment (66%), in matters of justice (64%), and in issues of war and peace (63%).

The apostolic succession is a cornerstone of Episcopalian faith, and so it may be highly significant that two members in three (66%) approve of ordaining women as bishops of their church. Opposed to their ordination are 26% of the faithful, and 8% are of no opinion on the matter.

Despite their support of ordaining women as bishops, a near-majority of active Episcopalians (49%) are opposed to the introduction of "inclusive;" that is, non-sexist language, in the psalms or liturgy of their church. The move towards this change currently is supported by only 27% of the membership, but 24% have yet to come to a decision on the matter.

Few members would like to see the Episcopal Church sanction relationships between members of the same sex (21%). Any such move is opposed by 64% of the membership, and 15% are undecided on the issue.

On the highly divisive subject of abortion, those who believe abortions should be legal under any circumstance outnumber those who say they should be illegal under all circumstances by the three-to-one ratio of 23% to 8%. A majority of 62% of the members, however, believe that abortions should be legal "only under certain" circumstances. Still undecided on the subject are 7%.

The findings are based upon a study conducted for the Episcopal Church by The Gallup Organization, and entitled, *The Spiritual Health of the Episcopal Church*. Information about obtaining copies of the summary or complete survey report is available from Episcopal Parish Services, Dept. 9040, Washington, DC 20061-9040.

ACTIVISM

Favor . . .

Helping all members of your congregation to speak more easily of their spiritual journeys	82%
Including more minorities in the membership of the local Episcopal churches	82
Helping your congregation seek newcomers in spite of the changes they might make	79
Seeking unchurched persons for membership in your congregation	77
Starting new congregations in your diocese	55

Would like to see national Episcopal Church more involved in . . .

Ecology	66%
Matters of justice	64
Issues of war and peace	63

Approve of . . .

Ordaining women as Bishops of the Episcopal Church	66%
Inclusive, non-sexist language in the psalms and the liturgy	27
The sanctioning by the Episcopal Church of relationships between members of the same sex	21

Belive abortions should be legal . . .

Under all circumstances	23%
Only under certain circumstances	62
Illegal in all circumstances	8
Not sure	7

Having a Deep Religious Faith Ranked Comparatively Low by Teens

Less than half of America's teens (43%) believe it is very important to have a deep religious faith. One in three (33%) says it is somewhat important, but 23% believe religious faith is not very important. In this respect, a deep religious faith ranks only eighth as being very important on a list of nine values tested in the Spring of 1990 by The Gallup Youth Survey.

By comparison, nine teens in 10 said it is very important to them to have personal peace and happiness (92%) and to be well educated (91%). Six in 10 of the teens or more, however, give high ratings to values associated with religion such as helping people in the community (66%) and working for peace (60%). Half of the teens (52%) think it is very important to get married some day and 45% would like to have children.

Just as many teens believe having lots of money (44%) is very important to them, as feel they should have a deep religious faith (43%). Only 16% think it is very important for them to seek fame.

Those who have the greatest sense of the importance of having a deep religious faith are 58% of teen-agers who exercised their beliefs by attending religious services during the week preceding the interview. Among those who did not attend that week, only half as many (29%) agreed that it is very important to have a deep religious faith. The sense of religion being very important also is stronger among Protestant youth (50%) than among Catholics (39%).

Young women (49%) are more likely than young men (38%) to say having a deep religious commitment is very important. Interestingly, the opinion of importance does not change as teens grow older.

Southern teens (58%) are the most numerous of those seeking a deep religious faith. Western teens, who usually do not score high on other measurements of religious opinion and behavior, show surprisingly high interest in developing a deep religious faith, with 46% saying it is very important to them. Less interested are teens living in the Midwest (38%) and East (28%).

Ratings of the importance of the values was obtained through the following question:

For each of the following please tell me if it is important, somewhat important, or not important to you.

The findings are based on telephone interviews by the Gallup Youth Survey with a representative national cross section of 500 teen-agers, 13 through 17, conducted between March 24 and April 4, 1990.

From Our Readers

Dear Editor:

In the March issue of **Emerging Trends** it is stated that "The only woman from the world of religion named in the past was Sister Kenney." This is incorrect. Elizabeth Kenny was an Australian nurse who developed and widely publicized a medical procedure for treating victims of polio. It is even questionable whether your characterization of her as a "charitable worker" aptly fits. Mother Teresa is thus the first and only religious leader to appear among the top ten mentioned on the most admired woman list.

Tom W. Smith
Director, General Social Survey
National Opinion Research Center

We stand corrected for confusing the title "Sister" that is used widely in England and in the Commonwealth for "nurse" with the designation in this country which is generally restricted to denoting women in holy orders. Her work in this country at least, however, was conducted through a charitable foundation in her name, and so we believe it is proper to designate her as having been a charitable worker.

Ratings of Importance

	Very important	Somewhat imporant	Not very important
Having personal peace and happiness	92%	7%	1%
Being well educated	91	7	2
Helping people in the community	66	31	3
Working for peace	60	34	6
Getting married	52	33	14
Having children	45	34	20
Having lots of money	44	37	19
Having a deep religious faith	43	33	23
Being famous	16	28	56

Church Attendance Unchanged As We Enter the 1990s

The first survey taken in 1990 on the subject shows that four Americans in 10 (40%) attend church or synagogue in a typical week. This is about the same as the attendance found in Gallup surveys in the 1980s which averaged 41% attendance and the 1970s when attendance also was an average of 40%. The high point of attendance occurred in the 1950s when 46% of the adult population said they attended church the previous week.

Catholics (50%) are more likely than Protestants (40%) to have attended the previous week, but the highest incidence of attendance is found among those believers who say they have been born again (56%).

Attendance is higher in the Midwest (46%) and South (43%) than in the East (40%), and in the West only 28% of the population say they attended religious services during the previous week.

Women are more likely than men to be found in the pews, by a margin of 44% to 34%. While 56% of adults who are 50 or older may attend during the week, attendance drops to 39% of those of middle age, and to just 30% among young adults, ages 18 to 29.

On any given Sunday, blacks (49%) are more likely than whites (39%) to be attending church.

Attendance is determined through the following question:

Did you, yourself, happen to attend church or synagogue in the last seven days?

The results are based on telephone interviews by The Gallup Poll with a randomly-selected national sample of 1,236 adults, 18 and older, conducted June 15-17, 1990.

Attended Church in Last Seven Days

	Yes	No
NATIONAL	**40%**	**60%**
Gender		
Male	34	66
Female	44	56
Education		
College graduates	42	58
Attended college	43	57
High school grads.	36	64
Non-high school grads.	42	58
Race		
White	39	61
Black	49	51
Age		
18-29	30	70
30-49	39	61
50 and older	46	54
Region		
East	40	60
Midwest	46	54
South	43	57
West	28	72
Income		
$50,000 & over	37	63
$30,000-$49,999	39	61
$20,000-$29,999	37	63
Under $20,000	39	61
Preference		
Protestant	40	60
Catholic	50	50
Born Again	56	44

Religion Still Answers Contemporary Problems

Religion still provides answers to today's problems according to a solid majority of nearly two adults in three (63%). An additional 19% are not certain about whether or not religion can address contemporary issues, but 18% of the people maintain that religion is largely old-fashioned and out of date.

Protestants are more impressed than Catholics with the contemporary relevancy of religion, by a margin of 71% to 59%. Born-again Christians have the most faith in religion, with 82% believing it can provide the answers to today's problems.

Women (71%) have more confidence in religion than men (55%), and belief in the ability of religion to answer today's problems often comes with age, as 68% of those who are 50 or older place their trust in religion, compared to 58% of those who are under 30 years of age.

Blacks (79%) are among those who show greatest faith in religion's ability to address contemporary issues, compared to 62% of whites who have similar confidence.

The well-educated (56%) and the affluent (51%) are the least likely to express confidence in religion.

Regionally speaking, greatest confidence in religion's viability is found in the South (74%) and the Midwest (64%). Easterners (57%) and residents of the West (55%) less often believe religion can help them to solve contemporary problems.

The question was asked as follows:

Do you believe that religion can answer all or most of today's problems, or that religion is largely old-fashioned and out of date?

The results are based upon telephone interviews by The Gallup Poll with a randomly-selected national sample of 1,236 adults, 18 and older, conducted June 15-17, 1990.

Can Religion Answer Today's Problems?

	Can answer	Out of date	Don't know
NATIONAL	**63%**	**18%**	**19%**
Gender			
Male	55	23	22
Female	71	13	16
Education			
College graduates	56	23	21
Attended college	64	19	17
High school grads.	67	17	16
Non-high school grads.	63	14	23
Race			
White	62	19	19
Black	79	8	13
Age			
18-29	58	27	15
30-49	63	19	18
50 and older	68	12	20
Region			
East	57	23	20
Midwest	64	17	19
South	74	11	15
West	55	23	22
Income			
$50,000 & over	51	26	23
$30,000-$49,999	61	21	18
$20,000-$29,999	68	16	16
Under $20,000	68	14	18
Preference			
Protestant	71	11	18
Catholic	59	25	16
Born Again	82	8	10

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Announcing . . .

Religion in America 1990

Religion In America 1990 will highlight trends in religious beliefs and practices, as well as the public's views on the impact of religion on society. Many of these indicators have become basic and standard measurements of the state of organized religion in the U.S.

The report will also present a detailed analysis of church attendance and membership by key population groups and by major faiths and denominations. Because no other organization regularly measures America's churchgoing habits, The Gallup Poll has lent its fact-finding service for this purpose.

Also included will be demographic profiles of the major faiths and denominations, as well as trends in religious preference and identification.

A special commentary by George Gallup, Jr. will explore the implications of recent survey findings for America's churches, as we move into the final decade of the 20th century.

The cost per copy is only $30.00, plus $2.00 for postage and handling. Make checks payable to Princeton Religion Research Center, P.O.Box 389, Princeton, New Jersey 08542.

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